

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7688

INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMCONSUL QUEBEC BY POUCH

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 MONTREAL 855

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TAGS: EAIR, ELAB, PINT, CA

SUBJ: QUEBEC REACTION TO AIR STRIKE SETTLEMENT

REF: MONTREAL 0832

1. ALL MONTREAL NEWSPAPERS OF JULY 1 AND JULY 2 GAVE WIDESPREAD NEWS COVERAGE TO MINISTER MARCHAND'S RESIGNATION AND THE BILINGUALISM ISSUE IN AIR COMMUNICATIONS AND ALL INCLUDED LEAD EDITORIALS ON THIS SUBJECT.

2. IN EDITORIAL OF JULY 1, LA PRESSE SAID MARCHAND RESIGNATION DRAMATIZES A PLITICAL CRISIS ALREADY OF EXCEPTIONAL INTENSITY. THE RESIGNATION OF ONE OF THE THREE WISE MEN IS A HARD BLOW NOT ONLY FOR THE TRUDEAU GOVERNMENT BUT FOR NATIONAL UNITY. IN MATTERS INVOLVING NATIONALISM, HE STOOD MIDWAY BETWEEN NATIONALISTIC GERARD PELLETIER AND THE MORE PRAGMATIC TRUDEAU. HE FAITHFULLY DEFENDED THE RIGHTS OF FRANCOPHONES WITHIN THE SYSTEM OF FEDERATION WHICH HE FELT OFFERED THEM THE BEST CHANCE OF DEVELOPMENT. WE CAN UNDERSTAND HIS GESTURE WHEN WE REALIZE THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE CRISIS CREATED BY THE BILINGUALISM ISSUE IN AIR COMMUNICATION. THE GOVERNMENT'S STAND IS EVIDENCE OF A FEAR OF DISPLEASING THE ALREADY DISAFFECTED ANGLOPHONE VOTERS. IT SEEMS TO HAVE LOST THE URGE TO PURSUE ITS MAIN OBJECTIVE,

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THE ESTABLISHMENT OF BILINGUALISM IN CANADA. IT IS TOO SOON

TO ASSESS FULLY THE MEANING OF THE MARCHAND RESIGNATION. IT MAY BE THAT HE OVERREACTED. WE WILL BE ABLE TO JUDGE THIS BETTER AFTER A WHILE, BUT HIS GESTURE IS A SIGN OF THE TIMES FOR THE GOVERNMENT AND PROBABLY EVEN FOR THE FUTURE OF CONFEDERATION. IN VIEW OF HIS RELATIONSHIP TO TRUDEAU, HIS DISAGREEMENT ON THIS FUNDAMENTAL ISSUE TAKES ON EXCEPTIONAL MEANING. TRUDEAU'S STATEMENTS OF LAST WEEK SHOWED US HOW SERIOUS THE SITUATION IS. THE RESIGNATION OF HIS OLD BUDDY REMOVES ALL DOUBT ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF THE POLITICAL CRISIS IN WHICH THE GOVERNMENT AND CANADA FIND THEMSELVES.

3. IN EDITORIAL BY ITS DIRECTOR, CLAUDE RYAN, LA DEVOIR OF JULY 2, SAID MARCHAND'S RESIGNATION TOPS OFF THE WIDE-SPREAD CONDEMNATION BY THE QUEBEC NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND OTHERS OF THE EXCESSIVE AND DANGEROUS CONSESSIONS MADE BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO THE AIR CONTROLLERS AND PILOTS (CATCA AND CALPA) WHO HAVE BEHAVED LIKE SEDITION-MONGERS. IT IS TRUE MARCHAND HIMSELF SHOULD HAVE STEPPED DOWN LONG AGO BUT THE TIMING GIVES HIS GESTURE A SPECIAL MEANING. THE GOVERNMENT IS BOUND BY LANG'S AGREEMENT. A VICTIM HAD TO BE FOUND, PREFERABLY ONE FROM QUEBEC, AND MARCHAND CAME FORWARD. HIS GESTURE MAKES US FORGET SOME OF HIS WEEKNESSES AND IT IS HOPED HE'LL BE AROUND FOR SOME TIME. TRUDEAU'S REPLY TO MARCHAND'S LETTER OF RESIGNATION SHOWS HE HIMSELF HAS PROBLEMS WITH THE CATCA-CALPA AGREEMENT. THE AGREEMENT IS AN INSULT TO QUEBEC AND PARTICULARLY TO QUEBECERS WHO HAVE PUSHED FOR A MINIMUM OF BILINGUALISM IN AIR COMMUNICATIONS. THE GOVERNMENT CANNOT REPUDIATE IT BUT SOME WAYS CAN PROBABLY BE FOUND TO MAKE IT MORE ACCEPTABLE. THE MEMBERS OF THE INQUIRY COMMISSION THEMSELVES COULD RAISE QUESTIONS ABOUT THEIR MANDATE. THE GOVERNMENT ITSELF SHOULD AMEND THE INQUIRY MANDATE TO GIVE QUEBEC FRANCOPHONE PILOTS AND CONTROLLERS THE SAME GUARANTEES GIVEN TO CATCA AND CALPA. THE INQUIRY SHOULD BE HELD AND AS SOON AS POSSIBLE BEFORE ITS MAIN PURPOSE IS LOST SIGHT OF. ITS PURPOSE IS TO FOSTER BILINGUALISM IN AIR COMMUNICATIONS IN QUEBEC, WITH DUE RESPECT TO SAFETY ONLY.

4. LA PRESSE OF JULY 2 CARRIES FRONT PAGE REPORT THAT LANG HAS ASSURED FRANCOPHONE AIR CONTROLLERS THAT THEY WILL HAVE SAME RIGHTS BEFORE INQUIRY COMMISSION AS CATCA AND CALPA. LEAD EDITORIAL OF SAME DATE SAYS MARCHAND RESIGNATION UNDERLINES SERIOUSNESS OF CURRENT POLITICAL AND GOVERNMENTAL CRISIS. A UNCLASSIFIED

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FURTHER INDICATION OF THE GRAVITY OF THE SITUATION IS THE UNANIMOUS RESOLUTION OF THE QUEBEC NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SUPPORTING THE QUEBEC AIR CONTROLLERS AND CALLING FOR THE USE OF FRENCH IN QUEBEC AIR COMMUNICATIONS. WHEN MARCHAND ACCUSED GOVERNMENT OF "NEGOTIATING THE ISSUE OF BILINGUALISM" HE SPOKE FOR EVERYONE INCLUDING FEDERAL LANGUAGE COMMISSIONER KEITH SPICER. THE TRUDEAU GOVERNMENT, WHICH WENT FROM ONE CRISIS TO ANOTHER DURING THE PAST YEAR, NOW FINDS ITSELF IN AN EXCEPTIONALLY SERIOUS

SITUATION. IT IS A SITUATION WHICH WOULD TRY THE STRONGEST GOVERNMENT, LET ALONE ONE WHICH HAS LOST MOST OF ITS SUPPORT, INCLUDING THAT OF PUBLIC OPINION. IF ONLY THE FUTURE OF A GOVERNMENT WAS AT STAKE, IT WOULD BE HALF BAD. BUT WHAT IS AT STAKE IS THE FUTURE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FRANCOPHONES AND ANGLOPHONES IN CANADA. UNFORTUNATELY, NOT ONLY DOES RESPONSIBILITY FOR ACTION IN THIS CASE FALL ON A WEAK GOVERNMENT, BUT OPPOSITION PARTIES ARE ALSO GETTING IN THE ACT AND ARE TEMPTED TO SEEK POLITICAL ADVANTAGE. THIS IS THE TIME FOR POLITICIANS TO STAY UNDER COVER AND LEAVE THE FIELD TO STATESMEN. IN SECONDARY EDITORIAL ON THE SAME DATE, LA PRESSE AGREES THAT FRANCOPHONE AIR CONTROLLERS HAVE GOOD REASON FOR ADOPTING WORK TO RULE MEASURES. HOWEVER, THE EDITORIAL CONTINUES, THIS MAY DO MORE HARM THAN GOOD AND MAY COMPLICATE EVENTUAL SETTLEMENT OF THE DISPUTE.

5. LE JOUR'S EDITORIAL OF JULY 2 SAYS LANG'S SOLUTION TO THE BILINGUALISM CRISIS HAS RESULTED IN AN UNUSUAL DEGREE OF UNANIMITY AMONG QUEBECERS. AS FOR MARCHAND, HE TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE ISSUE TO LEAVE THE CABINET. REACTION TO THE DEVELOPMENTS PROVE THAT BILINGUALISM IS THE MAJOR ISSUE IN CANADIAN UNITY. TRUDEAU HAS SHOWN THAT HE UNDERSTANDS THIS FULLY. HOWEVER, HE MUST APPEASE ANGLOPHONE VOTERS, EVEN AT THE RISK OF HAVING THE PARTI QUEBECOIS MOVE DANGEROUSLY CLOSE TO POWER. IN A SIGNED ARTICLE ON PAGE 1, LE JOUR OF SAME DATE SAYS ALTHOUGH MARCHAND'S DEPARTURE SIGNALS THE END OF FRENCH POWER IN OTTAWA AS WELL AS THE END OF THE RULE OF THE WISE MEN, IT STANDS OUT ESPECIALLY AS THE GESTURE OF A POLITICIAN WHO WANTS TO SAVE HIS OWN SKIN. HE SUCCEEDED AT ONCE IN MAKING PEOPLE FORGET HIS FAILURES AND IN EMERGING AS A LEADER OF QUEBEC NATIONALISM. IN ANOTHER ARTICLE, LE JOUR REPORTS PQ LEADER RENE LEVESQUE AS SAYING MARCHAND RESIGNATION DRAMATIZES THE SITUATION OF A GOVERNMENT WHICH IS FALLING APART BUT WILL NOT HELP SOLVE THE CRISIS. AS FOR MARCHAND, HE WAS FINISHED AND WAS ONLY LOOKING FOR THE PROPER TIME TO STEP DOWN.

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6. THE GAZETTA, IN A CONCILIATORY AND LENGTHIER THAN USUAL JULY 2 EDITORIAL ON THE ISSUE OF BILINGUALISM AND AIR COMMUNICATIONS, CALLS ON CANADIANS TO TALK TO ONE ANOTHER AND TO STOP SCREAMING AT THE GOVERNMENT WITH THEIR OWN "BLINKERED POINTS OF VIEW." THE DISPUTE IS CHARACTERIZED BY JOCKEYING FOR POSITION RATHER THAN COOL CONSIDERATION OF MERITS. ALL SIDES SHARE A MEASURE OF FAULT. THE CATCA-CALPA AGREEMENT IS A "SLOPPY PIECE OF WORK" BUT THE ERRORS ARE NOT IRRETRIEVABLE IF ALL CONCERNED WORK TOGETHER IN GOOD FAITH. IN CONCLUDING PARAGRAPH, GAZETTE WRTIER SAYS "CANADIAN CITIZENSHIP DOES INVOLVE SOME DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, SOME WILLINGNESS TO GET ALONG WITH PEOPLE WITH WHOM ONE MAY DISAGREE." IN SECOND EDITORIAL ON MARCHAND'S RESIGNATION, GAZETTE SAYS HIS "RIGHT TO GO OUT IN GLORY CANNOT BE GAINSAID, WHATEVER THE SHORTCOMINGS OF HIS CONDUCT IN OFFICE". HIS RESIGNATION HAS BECOME THE KEYSTONE OF THE BILINGUALISM CRISIS, BUT IT MUST BE SEEN IN THE POLITICAL CONTEXT MARCHAND PLACED IT IN WHEN VOWING TO FIGHT ON IN THE LIBERAL CAUCUS. PARTISAN INTERESTS ARE VERY MUCH IN EVIDENCE IN THIS MATTER. AS FOR MARCHAND HIMSELF, HE MAY IN THE FUTURE MAKE EVEN GREATER CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARD RECONCILING FRANCOPHONES AND ANGLOPHONES NOW THAT HE IS A FREE AGENT.

7. THE STAR OF JULY 2 IN ITS LEAD EDITORIAL SAID MARCHAND'S RESIGNATION ON A MATTER OF PRINCIPLE EARNS HIM HONOR AND RESPECT.
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HOWEVER, THE TIMING REQUIRES THAT IT BE LOOKED AT IN A DIFFERENT LIGHT. IT REFLECTS AN IMPRESSION THAT THE GOVERNMENT ABANDONED IMPORTANT PRINCIPLES IN CAPITULATING TO PRESSURES OF CATCA AND CALPA. HOWEVER, IT DOES NOT MEAN THE END OF THE FIGHT FOR LINGUISTIC JUSTICE NOR OF THE ROLE FRANCOPHONES MUST PLAY IN NATIONAL POLITICS. WHEN MARCHAND ENTERED POLITICS TOGETHER WITH TRUDEAU AND PELLETIER, IT SEEMED TO MANY THEY WERE THE LAST HOPE OF CONFEDERATION. HOWEVER, FRANCOPHONES ARE NOW WELL ESTABLISHED IN GOVERNMENT. AS FOR AIR COMMUNICATIONS, THERE

IS NO REASON TO BELIEVE THE INQUIRY WILL NOT RESULT IN A BALANCED AND REALISTIC JUDGMENT. THE FIGHT FOR LINGUISTIC JUSTICE WILL GO ON DESPITE MARCHAND'S DEPARTURE. IN SECOND EDITORIAL ON SAME DAY, THE STAR IS EXTREMELY CRITICAL OF THE COURSE ADOPTED BY THE GOVERNMENT TO "BUY PEACE IN THE AIR". IT SAYS GOVERNMENT HAS COMPROMISED THE INDEPENDENCE AND INTEGRITY OF PARLIAMENT, AS WELL AS THE INDEPENDENCE AND INTEGRITY OF THE JUDICIARY. OPPOSITION PARTIES ARE EQUALLY TO BLAME FOR NOT HAVING TAKEN A STAND AGAINST THIS. THE STAR ADDS "THE QUESTION OF BILINGUALISM AND AIR SAFETY, SERIOUS THOUGH IT IS, WILL ONE DAY PASS INTO HISTORY. THE DAMAGE BEING DONE TO THE ESSENTIAL INSTITUTIONS OF OUR DEMOCRACY COULD HAUNT US FOREVER."

8. IN SEPARATE DEVELOPMENT, LE DEVOIR SAID ON JUNE 30 THAT CHIEF JUSTICE JULES DESCHENES OF THE QUEBEC SUPERIOR COURT REQUESTED, IN A TELEGRAM TO THE SUPREME COURT JUSTICE BORA LASKIN, THE IMMEDIATE INTERVENTION OF THE CANADIAN COUNCIL OF JUSTICES TO ACT AS COMMISSIONERS UNDER THE CONDITIONS OF THE AGREEMENT BETWEEN MR. LANG AND THE TWO UNIONS.
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